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THE SOUTHWESTERN HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

Vol. XVII.*

JULY, 1913

No. 1

The publication committee and the editors disclaim responsibility for views expressed by contributors to THE QUARTERLY.

THE LOUISIANA-TEXAS FRONTIER

II

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PART II—THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION OF THE LOUISIANA-TEXAS FRONTIER¹

INTRODUCTION

The present article is a continuation of that appearing in THE QUARTERLY for July, 1906. In the former article the writer discussed conditions during the period before 1803, when such events as affected the Louisiana-Texas Frontier prior to 1762 concerned the local colonial policy of French officials in Louisiana or Spanish officials in Texas; and after that date, Spanish officials in both jurisdictions. Aside from strictly local affairs, the most significant question that appealed to all these officials arose from the fear inspired by Anglo-American expansion to the westward. This fear exhibited before 1803 may now be interpreted as a premonition of what actually happened after that date. The significant problem before the Spanish officials of the Interior Provinces and the Mexican Viceroyalty was how best to meet the threatened tide of American invasion. This problem concerned not merely the districts above mentioned, but the Floridas, Cuba, California, and other regions intimately or remotely connected with the Gulf of Mexico and the Northwest coast of America.

¹Part I of this study appeared in THE QUARTERLY, X, 1-75.

*Volume I-XV published as THE QUARTERLY of the Texas State Historical Association.

From the standpoint of the American government the problem was a two-fold one: First, to secure New Orleans and the western bank of the Mississippi, thus gaining an unquestioned right to navigate that stream in its entirety; and second, to round out their dominions to the south and to the west so as to secure easily defensible frontiers limited by well-defined natural barriers. From the standpoint of the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, the region under consideration, this problem involved the definite occupation of the lower courses of the Red, the Arkansas, and the Missouri, as a basis for a later possible expansion to the Rocky Mountains and the Rio Grande. Thus for the years immediately following 1803 our treatment of the subject falls naturally into two divisions which we may term "The American Occupation of the Louisiana-Texas Frontier" and "The First Attempt to Expand the Louisiana-Texas Frontier." The following chapters will fall under the first division.

At this point it may be well to refer to a brief article that I have already published under the title, "The Significance of the Louisiana-Texas Frontier," in the *Third Annual Report* of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. In accordance with the method there suggested for treating this frontier, the present study, dealing with the American occupation, is included within "The Period of Delimitation," which extends from about 1760 to 1821. This somewhat arbitrary division begins at the time when the first definite suggestion appeared to make the Sabine the boundary between French Louisiana and Spanish Texas and ends at the date when that river was finally accepted as part of our southwestern territorial limit. Naturally the most important phases of this question occur after 1803. A sufficient indication of this is the fact that as much space is occupied in describing conditions for the two years following the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, as in the whole of the preceding period. Most of the remaining years to 1821 call for a similar detailed treatment and the same is true for the quarter century to 1846, when the line that finally delimited the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, after more than a century of controversy, was gradually overrun and demolished by the tide of westward migration that it had not been able to arrest. Thus ended the history of this important frontier, which substantially includes the history of the region between the Missouri, the lower

Mississippi, the Rio Grande, and the Rockies, and which in intensity and variety of interest surpasses all other frontier areas in America.

As an introduction to the present article I desire to indicate briefly the various chapter divisions with some suggestion of their bearing upon the subject as a whole. Naturally American officials were first interested in the question of Louisiana boundaries, and although the western, like the northern boundary of Louisiana, was originally regarded as of less importance than that bordering West Florida, it acquired significance with the increase in geographical knowledge of the West as a whole, and especially with the opening of relations with the Mexican revolutionists. All early American attempts to define the limits of Louisiana were little better than surmises, generally assumed for the purpose of diplomatic trading. The Spaniard possessed greater opportunities for acquiring information in regard to this important subject, but in the beginning his knowledge was hardly more accurate than his opponent's.

With the occupation of such frontier posts as the Spaniards yielded in 1804, the Americans undertook the task of establishing upon a new basis their border relations with their neighbors. This included such minor tasks as regulating general intercourse between the white settlers, watching changes in the frontier garrisons, and considering the status of escaping slaves. Only the last named aroused a serious controversy and thus foreshadowed a more bitter domestic struggle growing out of the presence of slavery in this region. In addition to these minor affairs two series of problems stand out with greater prominence. The question of exploring expeditions along the disputed frontier caused considerable diplomatic activity as well as serious local concern, while both government official and private individual on either side strained every point to gain the allegiance of the Indians. In the early stages of this latter effort the ultimate outcome seemed extremely problematical. Later developments turned the scale in favor of the Americans, but their hardly-won victory made necessary the crushing of desired allies as well as the circumventing of Spanish efforts. This result, however, was not achieved until long after the Spaniard and his Mexican successor had lost control of the area involved.

While conditions on the distant frontier stirred up local problems that speedily acquired national importance, these same problems, because of our peculiar relations with France, England, and Spain, after 1803 likewise acquired an international significance.. They emphasize in a minor way our diplomatic subserviency to France, and in a more limited degree, to England, at a time when our government attempted to bully Spain out of territory that it rightfully controlled. To us it seems inevitable that the United States had to possess the greater part of the Floridas and Texas—the areas in controversy—but it is regrettable that this acquisition was accompanied by a policy of truckling to Napoleon and hectoring Spain, while employing numerous methods of legislative and popular *chicane* to conceal its true purpose. In the present instalment we do not touch the lowest depths of this transaction. Monroe at Aranjuez and Madison in Washington represented a nerveless attempt at independent negotiations rather than the shameless but secret subservience that characterizes the later policy of their responsible superior, Jefferson. But even while fruitlessly striving for an uncertain freedom in action, they suggested the unconditional surrender of Napoleon's behest that marks the next stage of their Louisiana diplomacy. At this period Texas is subordinate to West Florida, but one may note the general features of the controversy that is later to rage over its possession. By midsummer of 1805, then, the stage was fully set in Europe and in America for the combined diplomatic and frontier drama that marks the next four decades of our territorial history.

Some description of the sources employed in this study may not be inappropriate. In the first place I have made a careful examination of the various repositories in Washington that are open to the historical student. The most important single documentary source there consists of the six manuscript volumes of the *Claiborne Correspondence*, deposited in the Bureau of Rolls and Library at the State Department. The separate documents of these volumes have been catalogued by Mr. David W. Parker in the *Calendar of Papers in Washington Archives relating to the Territories of the United States*. In my footnotes I have used the numbers of Mr. Parker's *Calendar*, both to save space and to afford those interested a ready opportunity to trace the sources. In addition to the *Claiborne Correspondence* I have made use of various

other sources in Washington, which are indicated definitely in the footnotes and may be studied more in detail in Van Tyne and Leland's *Guide to the Archives of the Government of the United States in Washington*.

Outside of Washington the "Letters to and from Monroe" in the Lenox Branch of the New York Public Library, the "Wilkinson Papers" in the Chicago Historical Society, and the "Sibley Letters" in the Missouri Historical Society afford valuable supplementary material in English. The Spanish transcripts in the last mentioned repository, among *Adams Transcripts* in the State Department at Washington, and especially those in the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History have been still more valuable than the sources available in English. As in the case of Mr. Parker's *Calendar* I have used in my footnotes the numbers given by Mr. James Alexander Robertson in his *List of Documents in Spanish Archives . . . of which Transcripts are preserved in American Libraries*.

In addition to these transcripts I have recently had the opportunity to examine the originals and to obtain additional data from the Mexican and Spanish repositories, from the French and English diplomatic archives, and from the *Bexar Archives* and the archives of the State Library, in Austin, Texas. While most of the material thus collected refers to another period than the two years comprised in the present study, the opportunity to verify data obtained from the transcripts by personally examining the originals or copies from which the transcripts were made, has not been valueless for this work. A specific instance is shown in the Wilkinson affair mentioned in Chapter II.

At the same time, as one encounters in the different repositories in Mexico City, in Seville, and in Madrid, not to mention those of minor cities, an almost endless number of copies of the same communication directed by different conveyances to the same officials or to other officials interested in the same subject, he realizes as never before the necessity for some sort of calendar of documents contained in these various storehouses. Under the circumstances the task of determining the original of a given document or the attempt to note all the variant readings in order to obtain all possible facts, is well nigh hopeless. Still it is possible to obtain much that is new and significant from the Spanish and

Mexican archives, even under present conditions, and the uniform courtesy and intelligence of the officials in charge greatly lighten the stupendous task of searching through them. The description of these repositories as given by Professor Shepherd in his *Guide to the Materials . . . in Spanish Archives* and by Professor Bolton in his forthcoming *Guide to . . . the Mexican Archives* will supplement the brief mention here. My thanks are due to the above pioneer scholars, to the officials in charge of the various collections, and to those connected with the Bureau of Historical Research of the Carnegie Institution for numberless courtesies shown and assistance rendered in obtaining material for this and allied phases of a study of our territorial relations with Spain during the first quarter of the last century.

I. THE WESTERN BOUNDARY OF LOUISIANA

Early in July, 1803, President Jefferson learned definitely of the purchase of Louisiana and immediately took measures to gain information concerning his unforeseen acquisition. His utter ignorance, shared equally by his colleagues, is disclosed in Madison's warning to Monroe not to attempt at that time any arrangement with Spain regarding the western limits of Louisiana.¹ Meanwhile Jefferson took the first steps towards enlightening this ignorance by submitting to certain residents of the lower Mississippi Valley a list of questions relating to the boundaries and general cartography of Louisiana. The resulting correspondence summarizes in a fairly definite manner such knowledge on this subject as was then current in the Southwest.²

Jefferson soon learned from these gentlemen that the cartography of Louisiana was an almost unknown subject, nor could he gain from them any accurate knowledge of its western boundary. None of them, however, favored a claim beyond the Sabine. Claiborne wrote him that he understood that previous to 1763 the French and Spaniards planned to run a boundary line in that

¹*American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, II, 627.

²A general summary of this correspondence with Governor W. C. C. Claiborne of Mississippi Territory, Daniel Clark, Jr., of New Orleans, William Dunbar, of Natchez, and Dr. John Sibley, of Natchitoches, will be found in Cox, I. J., *The Early Exploration of Louisiana*, 36-39, where definite references are given. Cf. also Parker, D. W., *Calendar of Papers Relating to the Territories of the United States*, Nos. 6871-6880.

region and had fixed as its starting point the mouth of that river, which, he naively adds, "disembogues itself into the bay of St. Bernard." Those engaged in running this line had proceeded up the Sabine to a small fort, where they buried some leaden plates in the ground. From this point they carried the line in an uncertain direction until it intersected "a small stream called Bayou Pierre," about five leagues northwest of Natchitoches, where they ceased work.³

Clark approached the boundary question from the other side of the continent, taking as his starting point the limit fixed on the Northwest Coast by the Nootka Sound Convention between Spain and Great Britain. From the uncertain point where Spanish California and New Albion met, there was nothing to define the western boundary of Louisiana, until one reached the "Bayou des Lauriers" [Arroyo Hondo]. At the spot where the road from Natchitoches to Nacogdoches crossed the creek, "about two leagues to the S. W. by S. of Natchitoches on the River Rouge," and five leagues from "Adais," the respective jurisdictions of France and of Spain had been marked by leaden plates bearing the royal arms of each, affixed to convenient trees on each side of the road. From this point there was no indication of the direction which the line took, but similar plates were reported to have been fixed at the Yatasse settlement among the Nandaco Indians, about fifty leagues northwest of Natchitoches. Below the "Bayou des Lauriers" the boundary line was never established, because the French were not willing to allow the Spanish claim that it should run due south and strike the sea near the mouth of the "Carcasou" [Calcasieu]. But for this, he adds, "they [the Spaniards] have no authority and would, I believe, willingly compound to make the Sabinas the frontier."⁴

Dunbar supports Clark's statement regarding the "Bayou des Lauriers" by quoting a letter from a friend, evidently Don José

³Claiborne may have been speaking of a garbled version of the *Representation*, summarized in THE QUARTERLY, X, 24-26.

⁴This interpretation should be compared with the document enclosed in Salcedo's letter to Godoy, December 13, 1803. This is to be found among the *Spanish Transcripts* of the Mississippi State Department of Archives and History and is listed by J. A. Robertson in his *List of Documents in Spanish Archives*, as No. 4934. See also MSS. *Provincias Internas*, Vol. 201, *Archivo General, Mexico, Translacion de una Noticia sobre los Limites entre Nacogdoches y la Louisiana*, Bexar, April 24, 1809.

Martínez, who was engaged upon the Spanish Boundary Commission. He also states that he has a sketch, based upon a Spanish chart, which represents a boundary line as running in an east-northeast direction from the Sabine to a point about two leagues from the Red River, whence making a right angle to include the post of Adaes, it runs in a west-northwest direction for an indefinite extent, but with obvious intention to parallel the Red River. From this sketch he concluded that the United States could claim a line parallel to that stream and prolonged to the "Northern Andes, from which chain of mountains the Red River and the Missouri derive their sources." From that point this watershed should constitute the western boundary of Louisiana, possibly as far as the latitude of the Lake of the Woods. Sibley vaguely mentioned a similar line and likewise reported an agreement between local Spanish officials in Texas and Louisiana, by which the general commandant of the Interior Provinces exercised jurisdiction over the Bayou Pierre Settlement, east of the Sabine. This local agreement, however, in no way affected the territorial rights of the United States.

Aside from certain minor differences it will be seen that these four men in their reports substantially agree that the western boundary of Louisiana is of most indefinite character. Dunbar is the only one to suggest a fairly clear limit—the Continental Divide—which Jefferson also adopted; and this was later commonly accepted. The apparent suggestion by Clark that the western boundary of Louisiana began on the Pacific, is neutralized by his later statement that France had claimed only as far west on the tributaries of the Mississippi as her explorers had penetrated. All of them acknowledged that Spain rightfully exercised jurisdiction east of the Sabine, and Clark expressly scouted any French claim west of that river based on La Salle's Texas settlement. Dunbar quotes, apparently with approval, the opinion of his Spanish correspondent at New Orleans that the United States should cede to Spain the country west of the Mississippi in exchange for the Floridas. Clark hints at the same idea by stating that the boundary question does not depend on exact information, but must be settled by negotiation and compromise.

While awaiting answers from the lower Mississippi Jefferson began to formulate an opinion of his own regarding the limits of Louisiana. In the midst of correspondence regarding the explora-

tion of that province and the constitutionality of its acquisition, he took occasion to express his ideas on its "unquestioned limits." He believed its "exterior boundary" to be formed by the "highlands enclosing the waters of the Mississippi and Missouri," with such terminal points as the "Mexicana [Sabine] or the highlands to the east of it," at one extreme, and at the other, a line drawn "from the Lake of the Woods to the nearest source of the Mississippi."⁵ Passing beyond limits "not admitting of question," Jefferson stated that we had "some pretensions" or "some claims" to the "Rio Norte or Bravo." By the end of August, 1803, he became satisfied that our right as far westward as the "Bay of St. Bernard" might be "strongly maintained," but weakened the force of this statement by suggesting the possibility of compromising "on the western limit," rather than on the Florida border. In the autumn he sent to certain of his correspondents his conclusions on this subject, in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, "The Limits and Bounds of Louisiana."⁶

The importance of this pamphlet lies in the fact that it summarizes the views of Jefferson, which in turn were held by most American officials until 1819. The author mistakenly assumed that by the end of the seventeenth century France had actual possession of the Gulf coast from Mobile to Matagorda Bay, and that this possession entitled them to claim from the Perdido to the Rio Grande. He was ignorant of the effect exerted by the later Spanish occupation of Texas, or else wilfully disregarded it, for he represented New Mexico, and not Texas, as exercising jurisdiction to the Sabine, after 1762. He states that neither the treaty of that year, nor any other, abridged the extensive French claim to the "Bravo." Moreover, this claim was likewise protected by any legitimate interpretation of the word "retrocede" in the third article of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, and by the positive state-

⁵This line was mentioned in the Convention which Rufus King had just negotiated with the British government. The Senate struck out the clause containing this article. For the other references to the subject of Louisiana limits cf. Ford, Paul L., *Writings of Jefferson*, VIII, 242, 261, and *Jefferson Papers* (MSS.), Library of Congress, Series I, Vol. 9, No. 121.

⁶Published in 1904 by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., in *Documents Relating to the Purchase and Exploration of Louisiana*. This brief pamphlet was based on such printed authorities as were then available. As these were mostly French, with vague or misleading statements regarding the limits of Louisiana, the work now has slight value, although its author seemed perfectly satisfied with it.

ment of Laussat to Claiborne and Wilkinson at New Orleans, in December, 1803.⁷

In view of the obscurity in regard to the limits of Louisiana it would seem only the natural thing for Jefferson to ask the French or the Spanish government to define them. But the latter was then protesting against the validity of our title to any part of Louisiana. On the other hand the autocrat of France, who had dictated the terms of the Treaty of San Ildefonso, seems purposely to have made these limits obscure. Otherwise it is difficult to account for the language of its third article: "His Catholic Majesty promises and engages on his part, to retrocede to the French Republic . . . the colony or province of Louisiana, with the same extent that it now has in the hands of Spain, and that it had when France possessed it; and such as it should be after the treaties subsequently entered into between Spain and other states."

When one possesses the power to dictate the terms of a treaty and permits such an indefinite statement to represent the limits of a territory ceded to himself, it must be for some sinister purpose later to be revealed. Spanish authorities believed that Napoleon designed the enigmatical character of this article to afford a later pretext for reviving the pretensions of La Salle and Crozat and overrunning Mexico.⁸ St. Cyr, the French minister at Madrid, confirmed their belief by stating that Spain had conveyed to France the whole of the Gulf coast to the mouth of the Rio Grande.⁹

Napoleon first definitely showed his hand in the instructions issued by Decr s to Victor, November 26, 1802. The latter never had the opportunity to carry them out as captain-general of Louisiana, but Laussat, the prefect, as we have already seen, informed the American commissioners of their contents and thus aroused the protests of Salcedo and Casa Calvo. One should not assign too much emphasis to this French declaration, and cer-

⁷Claiborne and Wilkinson to Madison, December 27, 1803, in *Documents Relating to the Louisiana Cession*, MSS., Bureau of Rolls and Library, Dent. of State. See also *Wilkinson Papers*, II, Wilkinson to Jared Ingersoll, undated. Cf. Parker, D. W., *Calendar of Papers*, etc., No. 6907.

⁸Cf. *Memoir* dated December 23, 1814, in *Papers Relating to Burr's Conspiracy*, Bureau of Rolls and Library, State Department, and also Ogg, F. A., *The Opening of the Mississippi*, 484.

⁹Cf. Sloane, W. M., in *Am. Hist. Rev.*, IV, 447.

tainly should not regard it as giving us a claim to the Pacific. It was a mere order to take military possession of the territory, and seems to have emanated originally from the Department of Foreign Affairs, under the direct inspiration of Napoleon.¹⁰ The great despoiler who was reconstructing the map of Europe would not hesitate to extend his projected colonial sway over Texas to the Rio Grande, especially if this brought him nearer the famed mines of Mexico. He might use even such a poor source as Du Pratz's *Histoire* to bolster his pretensions.

Before the cession of Louisiana to the United States our representatives had on more than one occasion expressed themselves in favor of guaranteeing the Spanish possessions west of the Mississippi in return for the cession of the Floridas and in this they seem to parallel the suggestions of contemporary Spanish officials. Our representative public men had long desired these two Spanish provinces, or at least enough of West Florida to command the entire eastern bank of the Mississippi, but did not consider the possibility of acquiring territory beyond it. Yet both Livingston and Monroe had the sagacity to accept Napoleon's proffer of Louisiana, even if they had to exceed their instructions to do so. They did not lose sight of these instructions, however, but used them in the light of the indefinite Third Article of the Treaty, to extend the limits of their acquisition as far as possible. This meant to claim West Florida to the Perdido, on the east, and to make sure of this region and ultimately of all the Floridas by a supplemental western claim to the Rio Grande. The latter could be relinquished in proportion as Spain showed herself willing to accede to our wishes in regard to the Floridas. This was evidently the chief motive that led Livingston to devise our untenable but fascinatingly puzzling claim to West Florida; that induced the possibly jealous Monroe and the home officials to support him; and that made the Florida problem, for the succeeding decade, the significant frontier question in our territorial history. During this period the western boundary of Louisiana played a distinctly inferior part to the eastern.

In attempting to determine just what they had purchased, Monroe and Livingston found little to guide them aside from Na-

¹⁰Cf. Ficklin, J. R., in *Pubns. of So. Hist. Assn.*, V, 383. Robertson, *Louisiana under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807*, II, 141, N. 62.

pooleon's cynical declaration that if no obscurity already existed in the treaty, it would perhaps be good policy to put one in; or Talleyrand's more tempting suggestion that the Americans had a good bargain and would doubtless make the best of it. Barbe Marbois seems to have been more complaisant, for he evasively hinted at the West Florida claim and suggested the possibility of extension to the Pacific, even without the color of a claim. At any rate, Livingston started the fantastic interpretation of the treaty under which we laid claim to West Florida, while Monroe emphasized the possibility of exchanging Texas (although he did not know the country in dispute under that name) for the rest of the Floridas. Neither Madison nor Jefferson was willing to agree to so extensive a concession to Spain, even though Claiborne and other frontier authorities favored the relinquishment of all territory west of the Sabine.¹¹ The first duty of our government, however, was to make sure of our new acquisition and to defend ourselves from the charge of complicity in Napoleon's faithlessness, and to this end all the efforts of our officials at Washington, New Orleans, London, Paris, and Madrid, were for some months directed.

While Jefferson and his subordinates were thus giving the widest latitude to claims to Louisiana, it is hardly likely that he received with favor the meagre information that his frontier correspondent were able to furnish. This was opposed to his interpretation of these claims, and to that of Livingston and Monroe, which the administration had by this time completely adopted. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the printed report upon Louisiana dated November 14, 1803, he said almost nothing about boundaries or allied topics.¹² Whatever may have been his intention, he probably realized the force of Clark's suggestion that this boundary question was diplomatic rather than geographical in character, and a fair matter for compromise, as he himself afterwards suggested to Dunbar.¹³ In this negotiation the United States would be at

¹¹Cf. Hamilton, *Writings of Monroe*, IV, 24-26; *Am. State Paps. For Rel.*, II, 627; and *Claiborne Correspondence*, MSS., Bureau of Rolls and Library. (See Parker, Nos. 6919, 6998, and 7006.)

¹²*Annals 8th Cong., 2d Sess.*, 1498 ff. He may have intended at first to assert the Bravo claim, for a side note to this effect is crossed out in the manuscript summary of the letters of Clark, Dunbar *et al.* in the *Claiborne Correspondence*, Vol. I, MSS., Bureau of Rolls and Library. Casa Yrujo's vigorous protests against the validity of the Purchase, or the fear of complications with the French minister may have deterred him.

¹³Washington, H. A., *Works of Jefferson*, IV, 530.

disadvantage in comparison with the documentary store houses possessed by Spain, and this fact determined Jefferson to explore thoroughly his new acquisition. At the same time he attempted other sources of information, including the eminent scientist Humboldt, then visiting the United States. In his letter to the latter Jefferson states that Spain claims to the Mexicana with a line running from its source to the Red, while the United States claims to the Bravo, and he asks the scientist to state the population between these rivers. The English minister, Merry, writes that the Spaniards regard Louisiana as including only a "confined tract" west of the Mississippi and extending only as far north as the Missouri, while the Americans claimed westward to Santa Fé and northward to the source of the Mississippi. The adjustment, as in the case of the Florida disputes, would cause some difficulty.¹⁴

There were then few public men in the United States who were prepared to discuss Louisiana boundaries with the president. Among those outside of Congress the most important was Rufus King, who had just returned from the mission to England, and he seemed to favor the "Bravo" as the western limit. In 1801, he had so expressed himself to Lord Hawkesbury, and in August following the purchase, he gave Gallatin to understand that his position was still unchanged. If we may judge from the attitude of his close friend, Timothy Pickering, he later held the opposite view, but possibly the rejection of the article, in his Convention of May 12, 1803, which related to the Northwestern limit of the United States, may account for the attitude of both men.¹⁵

The House debate over the Louisiana Treaty gave the opportunity for a congressional interpretation of the metes and bounds of our new acquisition. Because of the great uncertainty upon these points some hesitated to approve appropriations to carry out the convention. Mitchell of Georgia, however, voiced the general sentiment that they should accept the province with such boundaries as it was generally understood to possess, and then, after necessary exploration, appoint diplomatic commissioners to settle these lim-

¹⁴Memorial Edition of Jefferson's *Works*, XI, 27; Merry to Hawkesbury, January 16, 1804. *Foreign Office, America*, II, 5-41, Public Record Office.

¹⁵Cf. King, *Correspondence and Papers of Rufus King*, IV, 329-332, 363, 554, 555. Pickering was especially bitter in criticizing Jefferson for emphasizing Crozat's Grant—a mere commercial concession. See *Jefferson Papers*, Ser. 2, Vol. 66, No. 36.

its. John Randolph claimed to have "some light"—probably a reflection from Jefferson's Monticello library—upon the western limit of Louisiana. La Salle's colony, he believed, afforded the United States a claim to the "grand river of the North," which limit embraced some very valuable Spanish territory, including the "rich mines of St. Barbe" and Santa Fé. On the other hand, he believed that the settlement at Adaes gave Spain a right to the Sabine and the highlands dividing the waters of the "North River" from those of the Mississippi, but not the "shadow of a claim" beyond. The extensive territory in dispute he expected to be profitably employed in exchange for the Floridas and in securing all the country watered by the Mississippi.¹⁶

None of the senators ventured to make a definite statement regarding the limits of Louisiana. Breckenridge forgot the Kentucky Resolutions sufficiently to favor the expansion of our republic beyond the Mississippi, for he asserted that the Goddess of Liberty was not to be restrained by water courses. Pickering believed that the French government had purposely obscured the question of limits as well as other features of the treaty. Dayton, of New Jersey, who, thanks to Wilkinson, had spent a very pleasant summer among the New Orleans creoles, emphasized the fact that the French and Spanish officials each had a different interpretation of the western boundary of Louisiana. On the whole these utterances show that the members of neither house possessed any definite knowledge regarding the extent of Louisiana. In lieu of anything better the majority were willing to accept the president's view and trust the future to decide the question in a way most favorable to the United States.¹⁷

A few months later Congress attempted to hasten this decision. The Spanish government had formally withdrawn its protest against the alienation of Louisiana, and the formal transfer of the province had occurred at New Orleans. Feeling secure in their new acquisition, Congress, by the so-called "Mobile Act" of February, 1804, attempted the first distinct assertion of the West Florida claim.¹⁸ Before the fiasco of this act became clearly manifest, the same body approached, but in a different manner, the western

¹⁶Cf. *Annals 8th Cong., 1st Sess.*, 401, 486.

¹⁷*Annals 8th Cong., 1st Sess.*, 47, 48, 60.

¹⁸Cf. H. Adams, *History of the United States*, II, 257, 258.

boundary of Louisiana. The Act of March 26, 1804, divided the acquisition into two portions, the southern of which, called Orleans Territory, was to be bounded on the north by the thirty-third parallel, and to "extend west to the western boundary of said cession."¹⁹ Thus Congress made no attempt to define the western extent of Louisiana.

By this time the President and Cabinet seem to have reached the sentiment that Jefferson expressed in a letter to William Dunbar: "However much we may compromise on our western limits, we never shall on our eastern."²⁰ On the 15th of the following month Madison, in his instructions to Monroe concerning the anticipated Spanish negotiation, expressed, among other subjects, the "united opinion" of the Cabinet regarding the western limit of Louisiana. Between the possessions of the United States and Spain a neutral zone was to be established, doubtless in deference to the antipathy that Spain had always manifested against near neighbors of vigorous type. This zone was to be bounded on the east by the Sabine from its mouth to its source, a limit that may have been due to the suggestions of Claiborne, Clark, and Dunbar. From the source of the Sabine the line should be drawn directly to the junction of the Osage with the Missouri, and there should continue parallel with the Mississippi to its source. Such a line would very closely approximate the western extent of French settlement in this region, and should be compared with a later suggestion by Talleyrand.²¹ The western limit of this zone was the Colorado (or some other river emptying into St. Bernard's Bay), with a line from its source to the most southwesterly source of the Red River, making such deflections as were necessary to include all of its branches. Thence the limit should follow along the highlands, forming the watershed between the Mississippi and Missouri on one side and the Rio Grande on the other, to the latitude of the most northern source of the last named river, and thence by a meridian to the northern boundary of Louisiana.²²

It will be noted that this neutral zone was to include a large part of the "undoubted limits" of Louisiana. This need cause no surprise in view of the attitude of many public men at this time in

¹⁹*Annals 8th Cong., 1st Sess.*, 1293.

²⁰Washington, H. A., *Works of Jefferson*, IV, 539.

²¹See H. Adams, *Hist. of the U. S.*, II, 299, 300.

²²*Am. State Papers, For. Rel.*, II, 628 *et seq.*

favor of closing the territory west of the Mississippi to settlement. Then, too, the United States was not to relinquish its rights in this region. That power was to remove all those who had settled within it since 1800. Each nation was to be permitted to trade with the Indians settled therein and to remove Indians from its own territory within the zone, the police powers of which were to be vested in the United States. Madison stated that he and his colleagues believed that the American claim to the "Bravo" was valid, so their proposal represented a very liberal concession which called for an equally liberal one on the part of Spain, in regard to the territory east of the Perdido. The United States, the Secretary warned Monroe, was to yield no more western territory than was absolutely necessary and by no means to deprive itself of the waters running into the Missouri or the Mississippi, or any of the waters emptying into the Gulf between the Mississippi and the Colorado.

In these instructions Madison stated the claims and concessions of the United States as definitely as current knowledge permitted. Further information regarding Louisiana, perhaps derived from Humboldt or Wilkinson, or from Lewis's early letters, or more probably the prospect that Spain would be forced into a war with England, led the administration to modify them. Jefferson preferred that the neutral zone should include the territory between the Rio Grande and the Colorado, or if necessary between the former and the Sabine, but if possible he wished our commissioners to avoid the perpetual relinquishment of any territory east of the "Bravo"—even in exchange for the Floridas east of the Perdido. He evidently was determined to make the most of Spain's necessity. Gallatin, however, dissented from his views, so Jefferson wrote Madison, July 6, 1804, that the previous views of the cabinet remained unchanged.²³

Madison's instructions of July 8, 1804, therefore, did not differ materially from the previous ones, except that the neutral zone was to be extended westward to include the territory between the Colorado and the Rio Grande, while all lines drawn from its eastern limit, whether the Sabine or the Colorado, should have a northwest trend rather than one due north. This latter provision was due to the prospective rapid expansion of American settlement west of

²³*Jefferson Papers*, 1st Ser., Vol. X, No. 113.

the Mississippi.²⁴ Madison sent these instructions to Monroe and Charles Pinckney, but did not absolutely preclude them from ceding to the Sabine as the ultimate limit of the neutral strip. A few months later he even sanctioned the abandonment of any pretensions of the United States to a claim beyond the Colorado, the Red, and the watershed of the Mississippi basin, in order to facilitate our claims to the Perdido and the purchase of the territory beyond.²⁵ Thus Texas was to be sacrificed to West Florida, and this sacrifice might ultimately include all territory west of the Sabine.

The American interest in the boundaries of Louisiana seemed largely of an academic kind—a scientific desire to establish logical boundaries rather than an overwhelming passion to raise a barrier against an unwelcome neighbor. Spain's interest in the question surpassed that of the United States; her records relating to that province and its neighbors were more voluminous. But her officials, especially her minister at Philadelphia, the Marques de Casa Yrujo, frankly confessed their ignorance of the disputed border region and emphasized the necessity of obtaining more definite information concerning it. Casa Yrujo even applied to General James Wilkinson to assist him in this matter.²⁶ In this connection his despatch of November 5, 1803, enclosing the translation of a pamphlet published under the nom de plume "Silvestris" (which he perhaps ill-advisedly attributes to Madison) is of some interest in the boundary dispute.²⁷ The pamphlet definitely claims the Rio Grande as the western limit of Louisiana and also the chain of mountains in which that river and the Missouri rise. Casa Yrujo does not specifically dispute the claim. His silence is curious but not conclusive, for it may indicate his uncertainty rather than his willingness to permit the statement to remain unchallenged. The Spanish minister also regarded the vast extent of Louisiana as a weakness to the United States, provided Spain retained possession of both the Floridas.

²⁴*Am. State Papers, For. Rel.*, II, 630. Ford, *Writings of Jefferson*, VIII, 309.

²⁵*Am. State Papers, For. Rel.*, II, 632.

²⁶Casa Yrujo to Cevallos, February 7, 1805. *Adams Transcripts*, Bureau of Rolls and Library, State Department. Robertson, No. 5021.

²⁷This is Casa Yrujo's Dispatch No. 380 and is No. 4927 in Robertson's list. The pamphlet itself is No. 4887. The fact that its author makes no claim to West Florida favors the conclusion that he was not Madison.

Fortunately for Spain her frontier officers possessed greater knowledge of her rights in the disputed territory and a greater determination to secure them, although they did not always work harmoniously to that end. When, in October, 1802, Governor Manuel de Salcedo received from his home government the order to transfer the province of Louisiana to the French representative, he immediately discovered many dubious points in his instructions, upon which he sought more explicit information. Among these was the indefiniteness of the article in the Treaty of San Ildefonso regarding limits which led him to emphasize the necessity for fixing the boundary between Louisiana and the Interior Provinces, so as to avoid any further trouble. There should be no difficulty in doing this, if they took advantage of the rivers which abounded in that region. In his view it was especially important to fix the limits in Upper Louisiana, where the English were attempting to approach the Interior Provinces by way of the Missouri. The home authorities agreed with him in the necessity for promptness in this measure and appointed him and the Marqués de Casa Calvo, who possessed considerable knowledge of the country based on personal observation, as commissioners to carry on a joint survey with the French. José Martinez was associated with them as chief engineer. Shortly afterwards the joint commissioners requested Nimecio Salcedo to give them all the information he possessed in regard to the limits of Texas with the neighboring provinces.²⁸

A few days before the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, Governor Manuel Salcedo submitted some "observations" in which he emphasized the rights of Spain, based upon the establishment at Adaes, and claimed that the French had remained at Natchitoches only because of Spanish sufferance. He stated that the French fort, situated upon the right bank of the Red ("Colorado") was taken as the starting point in running the line between the two claimants and that this line was to be drawn due south to the sea and north to the Red, which was to continue as the limit to its source. Later the French were permitted to remove their fort still further to the westward, and the "Bayou del laurel" from its confluence with the Red to its source was made the boundary; thence

²⁸Robertson, Nos. 4874 and 4896. *Mississippi Archives*. Casa Calvo and Manuel de Salcedo to Nimecio de Salcedo, July 8, 1803. *Archivo General de Indias, Papeles procedentes de la Isla de Cuba*, Legajo 185.

the line returned to the Red. Still later, when the Spaniards abandoned Adaes and ultimately established themselves at Nacogdoches, the French subjects of Spain were permitted to trade freely to the Sabine, and even in the region beyond Nacogdoches, provided the commandant of the latter post gave them the necessary permission.²⁹

Some three weeks after the transfer of Louisiana to the Americans, Casa Calvo wrote to his superior that the Americans were preparing to assert an "absurd claim" to the mouth of the "Bravo" and that the French commissioner supported them in this contention. From his own personal knowledge of the region and from information derived from others, Casa Calvo stated that he was prepared to overthrow this claim. He also cited the report from St. Louis concerning Captain "Merrywhether" Lewis's expedition as evidence of the danger threatening Spain's interests in Mexico if the United States continued to hold any territory whatever west of the Mississippi.³⁰ A few days later his colleague joined him in a communication to Laussat, the French commissioner, in which they asserted that the western boundary of Louisiana began at the mouth of the Sabine and extended to within a few miles of Natchitoches, in such a way as to include Adaes. The two Spaniards then asked him to give them his opinion before he left the province.³¹

In his reply of January 20, 1804, Laussat states that he was "vaguely charged to take possession of the country according to the terms of the treaty and without other demarcation of limits." The interests of his government had not required him to attempt any such demarcation and he was not authorized to do so, but to them as representatives of a friendly and intimately allied power, he quoted his instructions concerning the limits of the retroceded province: "On the south, the Gulf of Mexico; on the west, the Rio Bravo from its mouth up to thirty degrees of North Latitude, from which point the line of demarcation is undetermined towards the Northwest and likewise towards the Northern line, which is lost in the vast solitudes in which there are no European establishments

²⁹Robertson, *Louisiana under Spain, France and the United States, 1785-1807*, II, 150 *et seq.* It is needless to point out the fact that Salcedo's information is not very accurate.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 162-167.

³¹*Ibid.*, 168-171.

and in which it appears that they have never yet felt the necessity for limits."³²

In private conversation Laussat likewise communicated his instructions to the American commissioners Wilkinson and Claiborne. He may have experienced a certain malicious pleasure in doing this and thus causing a bitter controversy between the Americans and the Spaniards, for he felt that the latter had treated him with undeserved neglect and even with hostility. The Spaniards believed that the purpose of the French government concerning the western boundary, in contrast with the eastern, arose from a desire to embroil the two nations in a conflict from which they themselves would later obtain signal advantages.³³

Nimecio de Salcedo, the general commandant of the Interior Provinces, did not regard the appointment of this boundary commission with favor and showed himself ready to handicap its work, especially after Casa Calvo, by the retirement of his brother, became sole commissioner. He had himself expressed an opinion of the western limit of Louisiana in a communication to the home government, bearing the date of October 4, 1803. In this he stated that the line should begin on the Gulf between the "Caricut and Mermentou" and extend northwards to the Red River in the vicinity of Natchitoches. The northern limit of Louisiana was unknown, but he claimed that the jurisdiction of Texas and New Mexico extended to the Missouri River.

Upon royal order a special *junta* assembled at Madrid to consider the matter. In spite of the fact that its members lacked all definite geographical knowledge of the subject, they resolved to assert a definite claim to the waters of the Calcasieu ("Caricut") and the post of Adaes, as points always within their possession. Moreover the Spanish commissioners should claim the western banks of the Red and of the Mississippi below its mouth, with the exception of the post of Natchitoches, unless the opposing commissioners could show that other French settlements tributary to

³²*Ibid.*, 172. The translation is my own from the copy in the Mississippi Archives. This statement follows closely that quoted by Henry Adams, *Hist. of U. S.*, II, 6, and by Robertson, *loc. cit.*, 141, n. 62. The Bravo to 29° is mentioned as a possible limit between Louisiana and New Mexico in the project for a treaty with Spain, dated November 18, 1802. Cf. *Affaires Etrangères, Supplément*, Vol. VII, p. 245. *Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris.*

³³See page 10.

New Orleans had once existed within that area. Even if this were true the *junta* did not grant that such settlements could now be claimed as part of Louisiana any more than East Florida formed part of Cuba because subject to that island. At all events, the Americans must not be permitted to navigate the Red and other tributaries of the Mississippi above the point where the final boundary should touch those rivers.³⁴ In transmitting their report Cevallos expressed a preference for a simple boundary rather than an intervening neutral strip.³⁵

Despite the statement that the French Prefect gave the Americans the Spanish representatives protested against the interpretation that the Rio Grande was the western boundary of Louisiana. In a later communication to Cevallos, Casa Calvo stated that until he received orders to the contrary he should begin the demarcation at no other place than the mouth of the Sabine, and that he should follow this to the "Bayou des Lauriers," two leagues from Natchitoches, which report indicated as the spot where the boundary between Texas and Louisiana was marked. Meanwhile he should attempt to gain all additional information regarding the Sabine and the Bravo and the intervening coast from the observations of Captain Don Ciriaco Ceballos, who was in charge of the revenue vessels on the coast, and he hoped his course would merit official approbation.³⁶ In this he was not disappointed.

The French traveler, C. C. Robin, who chanced to be in Louisiana at the time of the transfer, rendered much more assistance to Casa Calvo than did Laussat. He seems to have formed a very unfavorable opinion of the American officials and settlers, and this led him to suggest to Casa Calvo what methods Spain should employ to retain the territory lying between Louisiana and Mexico. Casa Calvo employed Robin to visit M. de Blanc, a descendant of the famous St. Denis, then living in Natchitoches. From him the French traveler obtained some valuable information concerning the early French claims west of the Mississippi from which he prepared a memoir for Casa Calvo. He represented Louisiana as compris-

³⁴MSS. *Archivo General, Mexico, Provincias Internas*, Vol. 200. *Dictamen of Junta*, Madrid, March 17, 1804.

³⁵Francisco Gil to Cevallos, April 6, 1804. *Ibid.*

³⁶Robertson, Nos. 4956, 4965, 4968. *Miss Archives*.

ing very little territory west of the Mississippi, and in other ways favored the Spanish position in regard to the western limits.³⁷

Robin stated that the Arroyo Hondo (he calls it "le Grand Ruisseau") is the stream that the Spaniards have always scrupulously regarded as the western limit of Louisiana. Between this stream and the Red lay the only territory that France ever occupied on the latter river. Elsewhere the banks of the Red, and of the Mississippi below its mouth, belong to Spain. He also declared that France once possessed a right to that portion of the Arkansas controlled by Tonty's former post, and to the mouth of the Missouri; but the United States could claim nothing beyond these restricted areas. In this way he more than emphasized the Spanish claim east of the Sabine. He followed contemporary Spanish frontier officials in favoring the Mississippi as the ultimate boundary. Casa Calvo and his engineer, Martinez, evidently used Robin's suggestions in their later reports to Cevallos, and in addition incorporated certain observations drawn from the previous experience of Athanacio de Mezieres. They asserted the right of Spain to the watershed between the Calcasieu and Mermentou and to the "Bayou des Lauriers." If the Americans were ready to begin the survey in a short time, they should insist upon going no further west than the Sabine. The American claim to the Bravo, they stated, included not only a large part of the Interior Provinces, but also a possible extension to the Pacific. Against such pretensions they must make a resolute stand.³⁸

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BORDER RELATIONS WITH THE SPANIARDS

The leisurely discussion at diplomatic centers of the boundaries of Louisiana with a view to their final determination promised to continue for an indefinite period. Meanwhile the actual solution was being worked out on the very frontiers in dispute. The area of occupation was a more important factor than diplomatic skill, even when aided by unlimited archival stores. For more than

³⁷Cox, *Early Exploration of Louisiana*, 62, 63. Robin, C. C., *Voyages dans L'Interieur de Louisiana*, etc., III, 141 *et seq.*

³⁸Robertson, Nos. 4985 and 4993. These references are to transcripts in the collections of the Missouri Historical Society, for the use of which I am indebted to the courtesy of Judge Walter B. Douglas.

two decades before 1803 scattered settlements and army posts on the eastern bank of the Mississippi had afforded to a few adventurous American settlers and traders a base from which to press forward into Louisiana and Texas. Now others were ready to carry these settlements and posts into Louisiana itself and from this new base to extend their operations still further within the Interior Provinces and even to threaten the Mexican Viceroyalty. While the Americans were initiating this important work of expansion, the Spaniards were exerting every effort to restrict this movement within the smallest possible limits. Thus they desired to render Louisiana, in the language of Jefferson, "only a string of land west of the Mississippi"—provided it were necessary to allow them any holding whatever in that region—while the Americans strove to push its boundaries to the Bravo and the Rockies. But the Spaniards were not more united in their policy of restriction than were the Americans in pushing their claims to the uttermost.

The Marqués de Casa Yrujo, the Spanish minister to the United States, did not regard the cession of Louisiana to the United States as an unmixed evil. The consequent spread of population from the east of the Mississippi to the west of that river would weaken the American Union. Spain had only to fear greater facilities for contraband trading, but such practices by the new possessors of Louisiana might be checked or absolutely prohibited if his nation had the power to make reprisals from the Floridas. Thus East and West Florida, and particularly the latter, might serve as outposts for New Spain.¹ On the other hand, Governor Manuel Salcedo, at New Orleans, believed that great disadvantages to Spain would follow, if the Americans continued to hold the right (he calls it "left") bank of the Mississippi; and the only way to prevent this would be for Spain to relinquish both the Floridas in return for the cession of the other region.² The Marqués de Casa Calvo, with whom he was temporarily associated, agreed with him in his belief that "the dyke . . . to restrain the sweep" of American immigration must be erected on the banks of the Mississippi.

¹Casa Yrujo to Cevallos, August 3, 1803. Robertson, *Louisiana*, II, 69-77.

²Salcedo to Caballero, December 13, 1803. *Ibid.*, 148.

He also cited the presence of Merriwether Lewis on the Missouri as a specific instance of an American design to possess the entire course of that river and also portions of Sonora and Sinaloa. This could not be prevented as long as the Americans controlled the lower courses of the Mississippi's western tributaries. In closing his dispatch he apologetically reminded Cevallos that he who preserved Mexico for Spain would gain greater renown than Cortes who conquered it.³ The Governor of West Florida, Vizente Folch, despite the advice of Wilkinson, wished Spain to retain both the Floridas and the right bank of the Mississippi, for he considered the former the "antemural" of Cuba, and the latter of New Spain. If the Americans were permitted to pass such an important natural barrier as the Mississippi, which no one would have imagined possible five years before, they would soon realize their ambition to possess a port on the Pacific. What, then, would become of Spain's American possessions?⁴ The next ten years were to answer his question.

While Spanish officials were predicting the fearful consequences to follow the French or American possession of Louisiana, the Americans themselves were giving serious attention to its boundary problems. On May 1, 1803, Madison wrote Monroe that Citizen Laussat had arrived at New Orleans and that Casa Calvo was shortly expected. The main purpose of this dispatch was to assure Monroe that in the formal transfer, in which these two men were concerned, our rights under the Treaty of 1795 were to be preserved.⁵ Possibly Madison wished to conceal his own anxiety upon this point. In July, however, this anxiety assumed a new phase and one of unexpected personal interest. The Americans were to possess Louisiana, provided Casa Yrujo's protests against the transfer to them and his refusal to sign certain documents connected with that act, did not prevent its consummation. However, in due time, Governor Claiborne reported the passage through Natchez, on November 26, of the French officer bearing the necessary credentials for Laussat.⁶ On the 30th that official formally

³Casa Calvo to Cevallos, January 13, 1804, *Ibid.*, 166; Casa Calvo to Prince of Peace, September 30, 1804. Robertson, No. 5001.

⁴Folch to Someruelos, April 10, 1804 (Cf. n. 16, page 38, below.)

⁵*Letters and Other Writings of Madison*, II, 182.

⁶*Louisiana Purchase*, 1803-1804, MSS., Bureau of Rolls and Library, Parker, No. 6893.

received the province from Salcedo and Casa Calvo, preparatory to handing it over to the Americans.

The tidings of this transfer to France, though welcome, caused Madison's anxiety to assume a new turn. In that act nothing was said of the boundaries in general, and, of course, nothing about West Florida, the chief concern of the administration. On December 20 occurred the formal transfer of the province to the American commissioners, Claiborne and Wilkinson. Some days before the tidings of this event reached Washington the administration learned through Charles Pinckney, our minister at Madrid, that the Spanish government had withdrawn all opposition to this transfer. So no untoward event occurred to mar the ceremony. Claiborne, uncomfortable in his new surroundings, did, indeed, report a warning given by Laussat, that the Spaniards were reinforcing the Mexican border—a policy which his colleague Wilkinson advised them to follow.⁷ Another chance remark, attributed to Laussat, that “the harvest of Louisiana were (sic) not yet secured to the United States,” caused Claiborne to fear that the province might still revert to France, if hostilities in Europe should cease, and to express the wish that Laussat would not delay his departure.⁸ In view of the service that Laussat was then rendering in regard to the western boundary, such insistence savors of ingratitude. Claiborne soon found that there were others tarrying at New Orleans, whose departure he would regret even less than that of Laussat.

After the formal ceremony at New Orleans, the French commissioner, in conjunction with the Spanish officials, proceeded to issue the necessary orders for the delivery of the outlying posts to the Americans. Those for the posts at Attakapas, Opelousas, and Concord were promptly forthcoming; those for Natchitoches, Washita, and the posts of upper Louisiana, only after a month's delay. This was due to the tardiness of the Spanish officials, and their action was not surprising in view of their desire to retain the western bank of the Mississippi. Claiborne later explained that his own subsequent delay in taking possession of the posts on the Washita and at Natchitoches arose from the continued presence

⁷Claiborne to Madison, February 26, 1804, *Claiborne Correspondence*, MSS., Vol. II, Parker, 6950. Cf. also Robertson, No. 4885.

⁸Claiborne to Madison, May 14, 1804. Parker, No. 6933.

of so many Spanish troops at New Orleans. While they remained he was unwilling to weaken the meagre American force there by sending detachments to the outlying posts in lower Louisiana.⁹

On April 15, Lieutenant William Bowmar reported that he had taken possession of the post on the "Ouachita" (Fort Miró on the "Washita," to adopt the later spelling). This post was the center of a string of settlements twenty-eight miles long on that river. The neighboring population composed of some 450 settlers—Irish, French-Canadians, Santo Domingans, and Americans—seemed to be pleased with the transfer, but Robin, who was then present, criticized the policy of the American government in appointing so young a man for this responsible post. But when Hunter and Dunbar visited the region, nine months later, they spoke very favorably of the rule maintained by this young officer.¹⁰

The frontier post of Natchitoches was the gateway to Texas and the Interior Provinces beyond, and for this reason possessed an importance second only to New Orleans and St. Louis. A report of October 31, 1803, states that thirty-two Spanish troops formed its guard.¹¹ This insignificant force readily yielded the post to an American contingent (barely twice their own) under the command of Captain Edwin Turner. At 11 o'clock, April 20, 1804, the French tri-color replaced the Spanish flag, and an hour later the Stars and Stripes followed.¹² The former garrison then retired to Nacogdoches, the only remaining monument in Eastern Texas of the Spaniard's missionary and contraband effort. Later they were joined by the dragoons that had formerly been stationed at New Orleans. These troops, combined with the garrison already existing at that point, formed for the Spaniards a modest force wholly inadequate to the demands aroused by their jealous fears of the Americans. On the other hand the equally unfounded apprehensions of the latter unduly magnified the modest resources of their opponents.

⁹Claiborne to Madison, May 14, 1804, *Ibid.*, No. 6988.

¹⁰Cox, *Early Exploration of Louisiana*, 48; Robin, *Voyages dans l'Intérieur de la Louisiane*, II, 384; Bowmar to Claiborne, April 15, 1804, Parker, No. 6989. In Hamersley, *Complete Army Register*, p. 51, a "James Bomer" is given as first lieutenant in the Second Regiment.

¹¹Report of José Joaquín Ugarte, MSS., *Bexar Archives*.

¹²Turner to Claiborne, May 1, 1804. *Claiborne Correspondence*, II.

Most of those who witnessed the simple ceremony marking the double transfer seemed satisfied with the change. But among the few malcontents Turner noted the Spanish commandant of Nacogdoches, who was afterwards reproved by Nimecio de Salcedo for being present on this occasion.¹³ In alluding to the intercourse between Louisiana and Texas that official was reported as saying: "It is now finished and the door is shut forever."¹⁴ The future speedily demonstrated that Ugarte was no prophet, while the existence of a trade contrary to Spanish regulations and already largely in the hands of the Americans, was a sufficient comment upon his own rule and that of his fellow officers.

According to later American interpretation the peaceable delivery of the post at Natchitoches carried with it the control of the territory as far west as the Sabine, but the Spaniards refused to recognize this. As we have already seen, they hoped to keep the Americans entirely east of the Mississippi by the bribe of the Floridas, but failing in that they were determined to insist upon the whole of Texas, which, as they claimed, extended to the Arroyo Hondo, a few leagues west of Natchitoches. Their policy was to hold this as a *sine qua non* and by negotiation to secure as much additional territory as possible between that point and the Mississippi River.

A minor event that illustrates this policy is shown in their retention of the small frontier settlement of Bayou Pierre, on the Red River, about fifty leagues northwest of Natchitoches. It was formerly a French outpost, but by agreement had been placed under the jurisdiction of the commandant at Nacogdoches. Design on the part of the Spaniards and ignorance on the part of the Americans were alike responsible for the failure to include this in the formal transfer at Natchitoches. It gave color to the Spanish claim of jurisdiction east of the Sabine, yet Jefferson was willing to acquiesce in their temporary control as an act of international courtesy and out of respect for the principle of maintaining the *status quo* until all the frontier questions could be settled by treaty. The incident was regarded of sufficient importance, however, to be mentioned in subsequent diplomatic correspondence and in the

¹³Salcedo to Governor of Texas, January 23, 1805, MSS., *Provincias Internas*, Vol. 200, *Archivo General*, Mexico.

¹⁴Cf. Note 12.

President's message. While the Spaniards actually had no guard there in 1803 they certainly maintained a small one two years later, and its commander caused the Indian agent, John Sibley, considerable uneasiness.¹⁵

As we have already seen, there was a general fear among Spanish officials, both in the Old World and the New, that the occupation of Louisiana by the Americans would facilitate their entrance into the Internal Provinces. Casa Calvo, Folch, Salcedo, and their fellow officials felt apprehensive that the vast unguarded area extending without natural barriers from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico would, through its numerous water-courses, afford a series of open highways to Mexico. Even with such a well defined limit as the Mississippi, it had been impossible to keep the restless British and American adventurers upon their own territory. When, therefore, this limit was likely to be placed anywhere between that river and the Rio Grande, and when it was likely to be a mere conventional line unmarked by strong natural features, this task seemed well nigh hopeless. Yet the authorities of the Internal Provinces, the region most exposed to these unwelcome inroads, assumed with determination the task of protecting their sovereign's dominions from the foreigner. If they seem to exhibit the customary Spanish thoroughness in formulating decree and laxity in enforcing it, these conditions were due to the miserable resources at their disposal.

Shortly after the transfer was consummated the Spanish officials gained an important recruit—in advice, if not in deeds, General Wilkinson, who had taken part in that act as the colleague of Governor Claiborne, called upon Vizente Folch when the latter chanced to be in New Orleans. In the course of a long conversation he made many "reflections" upon the consequences which might be expected to follow the cession of Louisiana, and promised to commit them to writing for perusal by Captain-General Someruelos at Havana.¹⁶ At the end of the interview Wilkinson brought up what

¹⁵Madison to Armstrong, November 10, 1806, MSS., *Instructions*, Vol. 6, Bureau of Indexes and Archives, State Department; *Annals 9th Cong., 2d Sess.*, 1077 *et seq.* Jefferson's *Works* (Memorial Edition), VIII, 193.

¹⁶The Mississippi State Department of Archives and History contains a copy of the "Reflections," which Robertson lists as No. 4885. He likewise published this in *Louisiana under Spain, France and the United States, 1785-1807*, II, 325-347. This copy, as I am informed by Mr. Roscoe R. Hill, is made from a triplicate, one accompanying Folch's *Reservada* No. 3.

Folch terms an "embarrassing point." It speedily developed that the embarrassment was of the financial kind that Wilkinson generally experienced. Years before the Spanish government had promised him an annual pension of two thousand dollars. A chain of circumstances that concern other phases of Southwestern history had prevented the payment of this pension for the past ten years. Wilkinson was now on the point of departing for the seat of government and needed the money. Hence his visit with its accompanying "reflections." Hence his promise to sound "the heart of the President" and make due report thereon to the Spanish authorities.

Governor Folch was in a quandary. His own salary was never paid fully and promptly, so he did not have twenty thousand dollars for Wilkinson, although he seems persuaded that the latter's services were worth that sum. The relations between himself and the intendant, Morales, who handled the finances, were not cordial, so the latter might reveal the secret out of jealousy toward himself as well as unfriendliness toward Wilkinson. The only recourse would be an application to Casa Calvo, who, as boundary commissioner, had lately received a remittance of 100,000 pesos from Mexico. Possibly the payment of so large a sum as this to Casa Calvo, despite the uncertainty that surrounded his work, may indicate the importance that the Spanish government placed upon the settlement of its boundaries. Or possibly it may represent a sum to be expended in just such emergencies as now presented itself. At any rate, Casa Calvo had money while the regular frontier officials had little or none.

Wilkinson demurred at presenting his case to Casa Calvo. The latter's secretary, Armesto, must perforce act as interpreter, for Casa Calvo did not "possess the English idiom." Armesto was a friend of Morales, an intimate of Daniel Clark's, who in turn corresponded with Jefferson. Thus Wilkinson feared that the

to Someruelos, dated April 10, 1804. At present this is found in Legajo No. 2355 of the *Cuban Papers*. As it is signed by Folch to attest its genuineness, and is unaccompanied by any other explanatory documents, Dr. Robertson naturally assigns its authorship to the Spanish governor and thus misses its real significance. During the last summer I discovered in Legajo No. 1574 of the *Cuban Papers*, Folch's *Reservada No. 3*, an *Informe*, in which he expresses dissent from many of Wilkinson's views, and other documents that clearly establish the General's authorship and afford additional evidence of his venality. Mr. C. E. Chapman has recently copied these for me and I hope soon to publish them.

President would be warned from the very source that was to profit by his betrayal. Yet the financial necessity was apparently overpowering, for Wilkinson finally agreed that Casa Calvo should enter into the secret and that he should carry on the affair directly with himself and not through Folch as intermediary. This point Folch submitted to the captain-general for determination. Wilkinson asked that in addition to those already mentioned, Cevallos in Spain, and Gilbert Leonard, the royal *contador* of West Florida, be the only ones admitted into the plot. This seems to have been the case, for he whom Folch later terms "the Prophet Daniel," never learned what would have been a most welcome addition to his "Proofs of the Corruption of General James Wilkinson."

The sum of money that Casa Calvo paid Wilkinson at this time was twelve thousand rather than the twenty thousand demanded. This met with royal approval. Wilkinson had asked that his pension be raised to four thousand pesos, his salary as commander of the American army. Someruelos held this up pending royal approval, which was not forthcoming. As an earnest of the seriousness of his intentions Wilkinson presented his "Reflections" shortly after his interview with Folch, and for the next few years carried on in cipher with him and with Casa Calvo a fragmentary correspondence that seems more despicable in purpose than dangerous in execution.

The text of the "Reflections" emphasizes the use of the Floridas as a bribe with which to obtain the right bank of the Mississippi or at least so much of it as would suit Spain's policy of excluding the Americans from Mexico. Wilkinson begins by mentioning the prodigious growth of the States west of the mountains during the preceding thirty years. In this development he had occupied a prominent, if not wholly honorable, part. He mentioned that the retrocession of Louisiana to France ("that Gothic power") aroused the "sensibilities of every Spanish patriot" (doubtless including himself); while its transfer to the United States "for a sordid consideration" (How distasteful to him!) "opens great dangers to the American dominions of Spain." He believed that France, "always intriguing, unquiet and impatient," was trying to stir up trouble between Spain and the United States over the western boundary in order to derive some profit from the controversy. He thought that Spain possessed a great advantage in the Floridas, from which

it might dominate the Indians in the vicinity and prevent an invasion of the Interior Provinces. If Monroe's projected mission to Spain for the purchase of the Floridas should be successful, he trembled for the mournful consequences to Spain. The United States would immediately attempt to gain its western claims by force—a course of action they would not dare undertake if the Floridas were not in their possession. The only remedy was to make an even trade of the Floridas for the region west of the Mississippi. Any yielding to American pretensions would mean the giving up the key of the kingdoms of Mexico and Peru to what he terms an “army of adventurers similar to the ancient Goths and Vandals.” In this fashion does he speak of those rugged western pioneers whom he had been able to deceive rather than corrupt.

Wilkinson also gave suggestions in regard to the fortification of West Florida and the Texas frontier. Nacogdoches should be strongly garrisoned, with a port and supplemental post of observation on the Sabine or at Matagorda Bay. The Spanish government should firmly establish its hold on the Southern Indians and at the same time should secretly promote the plans of the Americans to remove the most powerful tribes across the Mississippi. In case this policy were carried out the Indians would take with them a mortal hatred of the Americans which the Spaniards might turn to their own advantage, even employing them to destroy all the American settlements west of the Mississippi. He mentioned that Jefferson had sent an astronomer to learn of the Rio Grande and the Missouri,¹⁷ and had instructed his secretary, “Captain M. Lewis,” to visit the latter and to extend his enterprise to the Pacific. The frontier authorities should be warned to stop this expedition. All communication between Spanish and American citizens should be prohibited. He referred to “an individual named Boone,” then on the Missouri, as one who should be driven east of the Mississippi. If he and his adherents were permitted to continue their progress westward they would soon be on the high road to Santa Fé. The frontier officials should be empowered to use money in secret service (a characteristic Wilkinson touch!), for in default of this they had just lost a valuable man (perhaps meaning himself!).

¹⁷This refers to Isaac Briggs, who was the surveyor for the district of Mississippi Territory east of the Pearl River. Cf. Jefferson to Briggs, August 11, 1803, *Jefferson Papers, 1st Ser.*, Vol. IX, No. 121, Library of Congress; Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, II, App. LIX.

Before closing Wilkinson emphasized once more the necessity of getting possession of the right bank of the Mississippi. If necessary, Spain should add to the offer of the Floridas a "sum of money which may be convenient to attract the attention of the people and tempt the government of the United States." Spain should even offer to extinguish the existing national debt of some sixty millions. If the Americans were still obdurate the Spaniards should offer a line of demarcation as near as possible to the western bank of the great river, running so as "to cut off the mouth of the Missouri." If necessary the United States might be permitted to control the Fourche mouth of the Mississippi, to prevent contraband trade, while Spain should establish a port at the Teche. In carrying on this most important negotiation the Spanish minister should secure the aid of Americans who were influential with their own government so as to direct its course "as most convenient to the interests of the crown of His Majesty."

It is difficult to find language properly to characterize this proposal. Its blackness may be heightened by suggesting that Wilkinson was probably as ready to betray the Spaniards as the Americans. For the present, however, Folch listened to a part of his proposals, but objected to the cession of the Floridas. He felt that Spain should preserve them and secure as well the right bank of the Mississippi. One would protect Cuba and the other Mexico, but both were necessary for complete defense of the royal dominions. The limits between the two countries must be marked by a natural barrier like the Mississippi (although we should hardly term the river such), consequently the Americans should retain no territory on its western bank. He considered the proposal to extinguish the national debt of the United States in return for this territory as "political heresy." At the utmost Spain should give only the eleven millions the Americans had paid for Louisiana, with the use or possession of New Orleans, adding, if necessary, that part of West Florida between the Pearl and the Mississippi. This would appeal to the parsimony of those Americans who dreaded a war costing far more than this sum, and would likewise show the interest of Spain in preserving peace. With these comments he transmitted Wilkinson's proposal to his superior and recommended the author to royal consideration.

The rumor that the Americans would revive the French claim to

the Rio Grande was a strong reason for Spanish jealousy of their presence. The Indian trader, Davenport, warned Ugarte that the Americans would insist upon this claim. Casa Calvo urged Elguezabal to meet their advances on the Sabine. The general effect of these admonitions was shown in Nimecio Salcedo's orders to keep all foreigners from the Texas frontier and to organize scouting parties to search for possible American intruders. On the other hand, Claiborne emphasized these fears and resulting movements as affording an opportunity to obtain the Floridas by relinquishing all claims beyond the Sabine. This suggestion, in addition to those of similar nature already given by Clark and Dunbar, may have influenced the instructions given to Monroe and Pinckney.¹⁸

The Spaniards of the Internal Provinces had not awaited the formal transfer of Louisiana before taking measures to prevent the inroad of foreigners. Nimecio de Salcedo instructed the Governor of Texas to allow Spanish subjects to remove from Louisiana to Texas, provided they settled far enough from the border to prevent contraband practices. In December, 1803, the viceroy closed his dominions to those who continued to reside in Louisiana. Salcedo forbade any American to approach the disputed frontier. In these orders we note the general dread inspired by the Americans in view of unmarked boundaries and the uncertain allegiance of the Indians.¹⁹

The Americans soon learned the existence of this feeling and uniformly misinterpreted it. In February, 1804, Claiborne reported to Madison that a large Spanish force was marching from Mexico to the province of "Tacus." This movement, the disorder prevalent in certain communities of western Louisiana, and the refusal to hold office under his administration he associated with Spanish fear and jealousy. He insisted still more strongly on this when he heard that the Spanish were strengthening their fortifications at Nacogdoches.²⁰ Just at this time Salcedo informed the

¹⁸Elguezabal to Salcedo, May 9, August 1, October 10, December 19, 1804; Casa Calvo to Elguezabal, March 5, 1804; Ugarte to Elguezabal, October 8, 1804; MSS., *Bexar Archives*. Also Claiborne to Madison, January 24, 1804. *Claiborne Correspondence*. Parker, No. 6919.

¹⁹Salcedo to Viceroy, October 18, 1803, MSS., *Archivo General, Californias*, Vol. 22; Salcedo to Elguezabal, January 18, 19, and May 2, 1804. MSS., *Bexar Archives*.

²⁰Claiborne to Madison, March-June, 1804. Parker, Nos. 6950, 6953, 6995, 6996, 7002.

viceroy that the American commandant, Turner, was constructing a new fort near Natchitoches, so placed as to command the road to Texas.²¹ Thus neither set of frontier officials failed to exhibit an unreasonable jealousy and fear of their opponents.

About the time of the transfer Charles Pinckney, our minister at Madrid, had reported that possibly the Spanish government would send some forces to Pensacola and the Rio Grande. Cevallos denied this rumor and the French and English ministers at the Spanish court expressed a hope that nothing of the sort would take place. But Pinckney persisted in his opinion, for information from other sources apparently confirmed his view. Laussat told Claiborne and Wilkinson that the Spaniards were strengthening their forces on the Texas frontier and would probably encroach upon the disputed territory. The tardy course of the Spaniards in withdrawing from New Orleans gave point to the charge, while other rumors tended to strengthen it.²²

Shortly after, Ugarte, the commandant at Nacogdoches, accompanied by the Natchitoches priest, called upon Captain Turner and endeavored to persuade him to a mutual agreement that no persons should pass their respective frontiers without written permission. Ugarte stated that their interest had been recently aroused by the rumor that a party of Americans had entered the country with evil design and that the Spaniards had been obliged to keep one hundred and fifty soldiers under arms for some time in search of them. The basis for this may have been the report of Ashley's expedition. Turner told Ugarte that well disposed Americans were always free to go where they pleased and that foreigners were allowed free ingress and egress, as far as our territory was concerned. Ugarte, however, urged the matter so strongly that Turner believed his purpose in seeking the interview was simply to learn the ideas of the Americans in order to forestall them. The Spaniard also stated that he had received orders from the captain-general to stop all horse trading. In response to Turner's inquiry about the passports, Claiborne advised Turner to show the friendly disposition of the United States by restraining the horse trade, and, in

²¹Salcedo to Iturrigaray, June 30, 1804. *Archivo General, Provincias Internas*, Vol. 200.

²²Pinckney to Madison, January 23, 1804. MSS., *Spanish Despatches*, VI, Bureau of Indexes and Archives; *Claiborne Correspondence*, II, Parker, No. 6907.

view of the uncertainty about limits, to continue the former custom of issuing passports, at least for the present. Ugarte later informed Turner that he ought to limit the passports to actual residents of his jurisdiction or to such as had absolutely to visit Nacogdoches to collect debts due them from its citizens. Otherwise he had no authority to recognize Louisiana passports.²³

The unfriendly attitude of the Spaniards soon began to manifest itself more distinctly when Ugarte tried to force some settlers in the disputed territory to move away from the frontier into the region west of Nacogdoches. As an instance in point, Turner cited the case of M. Roquier, resident of Natchitoches. The Spanish commandant threatened to confiscate a house and lot that he possessed in Nacogdoches unless he removed thither. Nor could he collect the debts due him unless he fulfilled the same condition. The second threat, it was later explained, was due to the failure of the corn crop for that year. It was subsequently discovered that Roquier was not favorable to the American rule, so he may have originated this rumor to cover up his disaffection. By the end of July, however, all Americans not professing the Catholic faith were ordered out of Texas, and even those permitted to remain must reside west of Nacogdoches. It was reported that this would cause some to remove who had resided twenty-five years in the province, but it hardly seems possible that any American had been there for so long a time.²⁴

Captain Turner also had occasion to report that at one time some Spanish dragoons visited Natchitoches for two days ostensibly to obtain medical treatment from Dr. John Sibley, and that later a Spanish lieutenant came there to purchase supplies; but in both cases they departed without accomplishing their purpose. It was believed that their true intention was to reconnoitre the American fort, with a view to find if any neighboring height commanded it, and to report upon the feasibility of occupying this position. The Spaniards, so it was reported, would first occupy Adaes and then push on towards Natchitoches. From Bayou Pierre came the rumor that a Spanish reinforcement of two hundred at Nacogdoches was designed to accomplish this movement, and Turner was afterward personally informed that detachments to the number of five

²³Turner to Claiborne, May 13, 1804. Parker, No. 6986.

²⁴*Ibid.* Parker, Nos. 7016, 7022.

hundred were to be sent to Adaes and to some point nearer Natchitoches, and that all was in readiness for these troops to march. Alarmed by this he asked to be reinforced by a detachment of artillery and considered the feasibility of ordering Lieutenant Bowmar to join him from the post on the Washita. Claiborne, however, was more fearful of the Spaniards in West Florida than in Texas, and was unwilling to spare any troops from New Orleans. He hardly believed that hostilities would break out, or that in case they did such reinforcements as he could send would be effective. As a matter of fact at this period the viceroy could not spare a hundred militia from Nuevo Leon and Nuevo Santander, and Salcedo had to request aid from Calleja at San Luis Potosi.²⁵

In addition to the fairly specific rumors about fortifying Adaes Turner reported less definite but even more irritating evidences of Spanish unfriendliness. The Spaniards were continually telling the discontented elements in his jurisdiction that the Americans were "mere hogs" who "did not live like Christians," and who would keep the planters poor by heavy taxes. By distorting every trifling circumstance, by searching the papers of all American travelers, and in general observing a course of conduct resembling war, all the Spanish officials, from the general commandant down, were, in his opinion, using "the most despicable means" to show an unfriendly disposition toward the United States and to alienate the affections of the people.²⁶

The Americans had at hand means extremely inadequate to meet the anticipated perils, but fortunately they had also greatly exaggerated the strength of the enemy. In August, 1804, Dr. John Sibley reported that there were sixty men in the American garrison, although more were expected.²⁷ This was at a time when Turner reported the Spanish garrison as five hundred. As to the character of the American soldiers of this garrison we may regard them as equal to the ordinary regulars of that period, and if so, they would compare favorably with their Spanish rivals. Sibley, whose position as an office seeker may render him a prejudiced observer, states that all of the officers at Natchitoches were non-

²⁵*Ibid.* Parker, No. 7026; N. Salcedo to Iturrigaray, February 2, 1804, *Archivo General, Californias*, Vol. 22.

²⁶*Am. State Papers, For. Rel.*, II, 690. Also Turner to Claiborne, July 30, 1804, *Claiborne Correspondence*, II.

²⁷J. Sibley to S. H. Sibley, August 28, 1804. MSS., *Mo. Historical Society*.

Jeffersonians, which is not surprising in view of the President's policy in cutting down the army; and that one "deranged officer at the post," a favorite of the commandant, who monopolized the furnishing of supplies to the garrison, was especially marked by his abuse of the President. In time this practice was bound to have its effect upon the inhabitants, who were beginning to think that the way to political preferment lay through criticism of the government.²⁸

With regard to these inhabitants Turner wrote that in a crisis he believed little dependence could be placed in them, except where their property interests were involved. They were "ignorant almost to stupidity." Accustomed to no system of government but the Spanish, they looked upon another as a "hocus-pocus," destined to make their condition worse. He held out some hope for the future, however, for he added: "When they come to understand the New Government, which, God help them, will be an age I fear, they will be better pleased than they have formerly been." Claiborne also distrusted these same people, although he advised Turner to train them in the militia.²⁹ The events of two years later showed that they possessed an unexpected degree of dependableness.

The situation that involved the property interests of the district had already been created. On July 12, John B. T. Palliet, a former French officer in the Spanish service, now a Natchitoches planter, appeared before Turner and declared under oath that he had seen in the commandant's office at Nacogdoches a royal decree bidding frontier officials use every means in their power to reduce and weaken American control in the neighboring territory. In order to accelerate this process they were to encourage the desertion of slaves and bestow upon the fugitives their freedom, a grant of land, and the services of a priest to instruct them in the Catholic religion.³⁰ This report, which perturbed both Turner and the surrounding population, was supplemented by later rumors that the decree in question had been thrice publicly read, and that the commandant told Samuel Davenport, the Indian trader, that he proposed to enforce it. The people of the Natchitoches district,

²⁸*Jefferson Papers*, 2d Ser., Vol. 76, No. 7.

²⁹Turner to Claiborne, July 12 and 30, 1804. *Claiborne Correspondence*, II.

³⁰*Ibid.* Parker, No. 7014. Such a decree was issued in 1789 with special reference to the Florida border, and had not been repealed.

for forty miles around, then petitioned Turner to police the negroes more vigorously and to forward their petition to Claiborne.³¹ This "ingenuous" action of the Spanish authorities thus promised to act as a two-edged sword, for it disturbed both Spanish sympathizers and loyal Americans.

On receiving Palliet's deposition from Turner, Claiborne was inclined to doubt the report, although he cautioned his subordinate to be watchful. When the petition followed he wrote more definitely. The sequestration of property—for such the decree virtually was—he termed an act of hostility more worthy of a Santo Domingo leader than the King of Spain. He advised the establishment of military patrols in such a way as to cause the least possible alarm. He then reported the matter to Casa Calvo.

The latter believed that the commandant was unauthorized to commit any act of the character alleged, as all his own and Claiborne's advices from Washington pointed to an early definite settlement of the questions at issue between Spain and the United States. When, however, Claiborne quoted from the language of the decree, an offer of "a free and friendly asylum . . . in the dominions of His Catholic Majesty, to such slave or slaves as shall escape from the territories of any foreign power," the latter stated that there must be some awkward mistake and that he had written to Nacogdoches for a copy of the order. He attempted to explain it by saying that it might have been issued during the late war between France and Spain when escaping slaves were to be sold for the benefit of the royal treasury, but that it did not then apply, for it was to the interest of Spain to protect property at Natchitoches.³² This suggestion has a sinister significance, in view of Spanish efforts to regain the territory west of the Mississippi, but Claiborne seems to ignore it, possibly because of his partial sympathy with the idea. Later Casa Calvo reported to Claiborne that Ugarte had written to him, asking for the abrogation of the decree in question. He had not promulgated it, but it was known to some of the French inhabitants of Louisiana, and in some way these had caused the circulation of false reports of its character.

³¹Turner to Claiborne, July 29, 30, and August 3, 1804. *Claiborne Correspondence*, II.

³²Claiborne to Casa Calvo, September 1, 1804; Casa Calvo to Claiborne, September 5, 1804, *Ibid.* Parker, Nos. 7049, 7051.

Such slaves as were in the Natchitoches district had been introduced there during Spanish rule, so his government had the moral responsibility of preserving that form of property, under whatever government the region should have.³³

By this time, however, the question had become something more than a mere theory. On October 14 it was discovered that the negroes on one of the plantations near Natchitoches planned to escape into Spanish territory. Nine of them did, indeed, break into a house, take powder, lead and horses, and make off beyond the Sabine, despite all efforts to recapture them. Another negro, who was wounded by a patrol, turned informer, and implicated some thirty others. Some of these had attempted to escape, but had returned to learn why the others did not follow. The informer implicated two white men, one of whom was a Spaniard named Martinez, as the agents who had stirred up the negroes to attempt this flight.³⁴ The successful escape of nine, due apparently to Spanish influence, enraged the population of Natchitoches, and the wilder spirits asked Turner's permission to attack Nacogdoches, if the fugitives were not immediately delivered to them. Turner assured them that he had already requested Ugarte to do this, and succeeded in temporarily pacifying them; but he realized the significance of this readiness to attack the Spaniards. The spirit of the Mississippi was already transferred to the Sabine.

Within a fortnight Claiborne learned of this event and lost no time in communicating the facts to Casa Calvo, and in suggesting to Colonel Butler that he should move the American troops from Attakapas and Opelousas to Natchitoches. To Turner he expressed his regret and advised a careful maintenance of the patrol. Then ensued a vigorous controversy between Claiborne and Casa Calvo. The latter censured the French inhabitants of the disturbed district for their indiscretion in making the proclamation known and thus indirectly inciting their slaves, but Claiborne threw the blame on the commandant at Nacogdoches. Casa Calvo favored the return of the slaves on condition that they be well treated, but Claiborne insisted upon their unconditional surrender. The upshot of the matter was that Casa Calvo assumed the responsibility of

³³Casa Calvo to Claiborne, November 6, 1805, *Ibid.* Parker, No. 7102.

³⁴Turner to Claiborne, October 16, 17, 1804, *Ibid.* Parker, Nos. 7080, 7082.

bidding Ugarte return the slaves and suspend the decree until he could hear from Spain. This was finally done.

Later, Casa Calvo reported that his course met with the approval of his government, but Turner stated that Salcedo suspended Ugarte for carrying out this suggestion and instructed his successor to execute the decree. Claiborne, however, managed to secure from Casa Calvo a reiteration of his position in this matter. In reporting the affair to his government, Casa Calvo stated that he had tried to quiet Claiborne by suggesting that the *cedula* did not refer to the Americans, but to the French, with whom the Spaniards were at war when it was issued.³⁵ The incident is significant of the influence which the latter wielded, despite the fact that the American government refused to acknowledge his position as boundary commissioner, and that his fellow officials in Florida and the Internal Provinces were jealous of his power and did their best to hamper him in his efforts to carry out his task. The incident aroused also other portions of Orleans Territory, particularly Point Coupeé. The slaves of this region had formerly revolted under Spanish rule and were now reported as restive, owing to the tidings from Natchitoches.

On November 10, 1804, Casa Calvo addressed a communication to Nimecio Salcedo, in which he expressed his belief that the royal order of 1789 must be modified by the retrocession of Louisiana. He mentioned Claiborne's complaint in August, the recent escape of slaves in Natchitoches, and the report of disturbances at Point Coupeé as evidencing the necessity of suspending the order until they could learn His Majesty's latest determination. Accordingly he had requested Ugarte to do so and he hoped this would meet with Salcedo's approval.³⁶

A few days before this Ugarte had received a testimonial from certain officials and citizens of Natchitoches stating that his course had foiled the negro insurrection and thanking him warmly as the benefactor of their country. On two separate occasions Ugarte had likewise employed his troops to secure and return parties of escaping negroes.³⁷ When Ugarte received Casa

³⁵*Ibid.* Parker, Nos. 7097-7103, 7107, 7186, 7190, 7260.

³⁶Casa Calvo to (Salcedo) and to Ugarte, November 10, 1804. MSS., *Archivo General, Provincias Internas*, Vol. 200.

³⁷Sindicos and Major of Militia to Ugarte, November 14, 1804; Salcedo to Governor of Texas, January 23, 1805, *Ibid.*

Calvo's complaint and request he felt hurt at the implied reflection upon his conduct. He defended himself vigorously against the charge of inciting a slave insurrection across the border and protested that all reports of this character were malicious falsehoods. He sent the testimonial describing his real services and requested some means of defending himself from "the assertions of frontier vagabonds and peddlers of news."³⁸ He was very likely right in thus characterizing those who had defamed him. It was the policy of such traders as Davenport, who enjoyed special privileges under the Spaniards, to prevent cordial relations between the latter and the Americans, and others like Palliet may have assisted them for personal reasons.

Salcedo, however, was greatly incensed against the Americans because of their activity in exploring their new acquisition and in establishing relations with the Indians, and was not inclined to favor his inquiet neighbors. He thought that Ugarte's defense ought to allay Governor Claiborne's fears, but regarded himself as without authority to suspend the decree. He advised the Governor or Texas to detain all fugitive slaves until he could learn the King's will, or at least the opinion of Don Pedro Grimarest, the recently appointed chief of the Eastern Interior Provinces.³⁹ Under the Treaty of 1795 the United States could ask nothing more and he requested the viceroy to express his own opinion and to aid him in every way possible, until Grimarest should arrive.⁴⁰

Notwithstanding his uncertainty in regard to international relations Salcedo maintained very strict ideas of discipline. Ugarte may have prevented a border war, but in doing so he had violated the letter of his instructions. Salcedo therefore suspended the unfortunate official and ordered him to Bexar, where the Governor of Texas was to examine his conduct carefully. Ugarte must explain why he had permitted a militia captain to visit Natchitoches and to be present at the transfer of that post to the Americans; why he had on two occasions employed his troops to capture and return fugitive slaves to Louisiana; and how he reconciled such deeds with

³⁸Ugarte to Salcedo, December 26, 1804. *Ibid.*

³⁹This was the recently created jurisdiction that had been formed from a part of his own dominions with the addition of Nuevo Leon and Nuevo Santander. Grimarest, however, never assumed the command.

⁴⁰Salcedo to Iturrigaray, January 23, 1805. *Ibid.*

a strict compliance with his duties.⁴¹ Evidently Ugarte was not able to clear himself of fault, for another commandant took charge of Nacogdoches.

Salcedo suggested to Casa Calvo that the course of the American government since taking possession of Louisiana had been sufficiently unfriendly to neutralize all of their complaints in regard to escaping slaves. The Lewis and Clark expedition and similar undertakings since projected by Jefferson, and the various attempts to tamper with the allegiance of the Indians would abundantly justify precautionary or retaliatory measures on the part of the Spaniards. Despite his lack of resources to meet these dangers he had succeeded in sending fifty men from Coahuila into Texas and he advised the governor of that province to strengthen secretly the garrison at Nacogdoches by sending forward a few men with each convoy of mail and bidding them remain there.⁴² At the same time Casa Yrujo was explaining to Jefferson at his Monticello home that any frontier movements could only be intended for defense in view of the European situation. The President agreed with him that it was necessary to receive such reports and others relating to escaping slaves with great circumspection and forbear to increase forces or in other ways change the existing situation.⁴³

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*; also Salcedo to Casa Calvo, January 22, 1805.

⁴³Casa Yrujo to Cevallos, October 26, 1804. *Adams Transcripts, Spanish State Papers*, Bureau of Rolls and Library. Robertson, No. 5007.